

NEWS RELEASE

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Project Safe Neighborhoods: Grand Jury Returns Three Indictments in Unrelated Cases Charging Felons with Possessing Guns

Springfield, IL- Rodger A. Heaton, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, announced that a federal grand jury today charged two Kankakee men and one Decatur man with possession of a firearm after being convicted of a felony. Those charged under the Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative include the following:

Masson E. Covington, 21, of Kankakee, Illinois, charged with possession of a .380 caliber, semi-automatic pistol, on or about September 25, 2005, in Kankakee county;

Desean W. Johnson, 27, of Kankakee, charged with possessing a firearm on March 3, 2006 and with possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute; and,

Derek L. Edwards, 25, of Decatur, Illinois, charged with possessing a nine millimeter semi-automatic pistol on March 8, 2006, in Macon county.

If convicted of the offense of a felon in possession of a firearm, the maximum statutory penalty is 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. For possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, the penalty is a mandatory consecutive term of five years in prison.

Each of the three men are currently in law enforcement custody and will be scheduled for arraignment in U.S. District Court in Urbana at a date to be determined by the U.S. District Clerk.

The charges are the result of investigations by the Kankakee Police Department, the Decatur Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Covington and Edwards are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Colin S. Bruce; Timothy A. Bass, Assistant U.S. Attorney, is prosecuting the case against Johnson.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation; the defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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